

### **Abstract**

A method and apparatus are described that provide message notification to users of an interactive television service. According to one aspect of the present invention, a method comprises determining whether to inform a user of the interactive television service of receipt of an email message. Responsive to determining to inform the user of the receipt of the email message, a hot key signal is generated indicating availability of the email message. The hot key signal is inserted into a content signal transmitted to the user from the interactive television service provider via a network. Once the hot key signal is received, a determination is made whether the hot key signal is relevant to the user. Responsive to determining the hot key signal is relevant to the user, an indication that the hot key signal has been received is displayed on a screen.